

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 19196

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CVIS, US, UR, GW, UK, IT, FR

SUBJECT: SOVIET RETALIATION IN CONSULAR CASES

REF: (A) MOSCOW 18540, (B) MOSCOW 18269

1. SUMMARY. IN TALKING TO WEST EUROPEAN ALLIES ABOUT SOVIET RETALIATION IN CONSULAR MATTERS, WE HAVE LEARNED OF SOME CASES WHICH, WHEN LOOKED AT IN LIGHT OF U.S. CASES, SEEM TO SHOW A PATTERN IN WHICH SOVIETS REACT IN KIND TO ARRESTS OR EXPULSIONS BUT REPLY TO VISA REFUSALS ONLY BE DELAYING ISSUANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. FRG EMBASSY HERE HAS TOLD US OF ARREST IN LATE NOVEMBER ON ESPIONAGE CHARGES OF A MEMBER OF SOVIET TRADE REPRESENTATION IN COLOGNE WHICH HAS PRODUCED A RAPID SOVIET RESPONSE. AT DEC 7 QP MEETING FRG AMBASSADOR SAHM TOLD CHARGE HE WAS CALLED IN TO MFA FOR PROTEST BY THIRD EUROPEAN DIVISION CHIEF BONDARENKO, WHO DENIED THERE WAS ANY SUBSTANCE TO CHARGES AND CLAIMED CASE WAS "PLANNED" BY FRG AUTHORITIES. SEVERAL DAYS AGO SOVIET AUTHORITIES ARRESTED GERMAN BUSINESSMAN ON AS YET UNSPECIFIED CHARGES, AND ARE STILL HOLDING HIM. SAHM STATED THAT ARREST IN MOSCOW "PROBABLY" WAS IN RETALIATION FOR COLOGNE CASE, AND
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ASSUMPTION IS THAT SOVIETS WILL HANDLE CASE IN SAME MANNER AS GERMANS DO THE CASE OF THE SOVIET ARRESTED IN COLOGNE.

3. MEANWHILE ITALIAN EMBASSY HERE HAS TOLD US OF GOI REFUSAL OF VISA LAST SUMMER TO SOVIET OFFICIAL THAT APPARENTLY RESULTED ONLY IN DELAY FOR ONE MONTH OF GOI REQUEST IN OCTOBER FOR VISA FOR ITS OFFICIAL. WE ARE ALSO INFORMED BY OUR BRITISH COLLEAGUES THAT HMG IN LATTER HALF OF NOVEMBER REFUSED VISAS TO TWO SOVIET OFFICIALS APPLYING TO TRAVEL TO LONDON ON TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENTS. THUS FAR BRITISH HAVE NOTICED NO RECIPROCAL ACTION BUT IT IS STILL EARLY.

4. FINALLY, WE UNDERSTAND FROM FRENCH EMBASSY THAT ALL OUTSTANDING OFFICIAL VISA CASES (REPORTED IN REF A) HAVE NOW BEEN SETTLED. LATEST LONG-DELAYED SOVIET VISA WAS RECEIVED BY CULTURAL COUNSELOR WHO IS EXPECTED IN MOSCOW SOON. THIS WOULD SEEM TO MATCH ITALIAN EXPERIENCE IN THAT FRENCH, LIKE ITALIANS, ACTUALLY REFUSED TO ISSUE VISAS, WHILE SOVIETS RESPONDED IN BOTH INSTANCES BY DELAYING BUT EVENTUALLY GRANTING VISA REQUESTS.

5. COMMENT. ABOVE CASES, WHEN ADDED TO OUR OWN BREMENT AND PAN AM CASES, APPEAR TO SHOW PATTERN IN RECENT SOVIET RESPONSES TO WESTERN ACTIONS AGAINST SOVIET NATIONALS. IT SEEMS THAT VISA REFUSALS ARE REPLIED TO BY DELAYS IN ISSUING VISAS, WHILE EXPULSIONS AND ARRESTS ARE REPLIED TO IN KIND. IF THIS PATTERN HOLDS, BRITISH ARE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE TWO DELAYS FOR HMG OFFICIALS REQUESTING VISITOR VISAS, AND SHOULD FRG EXPEL ARRESTED SOVIET--SAHM THOUGHT THIS WOULD HAPPEN--GERMAN BUSINESSMAN UNDER ARREST IN MOSCOW WOULD BE ASKED TO LEAVE. WE WILL BE WATCHING PENDING CASES IN COMING WEEKS AND WILL REPORT FURTHER ON DEVELOPMENTS.
MATLOCK

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